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CIA 602 WALTERS, VERNON
CIA 1.81 Helms, Richard

(orig under Walters)

Cover-up Trial 410.2 Takes 620

BY MIKE SHANAHAN

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON AP - The Watergate cover-up trial has reopened the question of whether the Central Intelligence Agency played a role in attempts to choke off early FBI Watergate investigations.

U.S. District Judge John J. Sirica ordered Watergate prosecutors Thursday to take preliminary steps to bring former CIA Director Richard M. Helms back from Iran, where he is U.S. ambassador. Helms would testify as a defense witness.

Meanwhile, deputy CIA director Vernon A. Walters was to testify today about how the agency reacted in the days following the June 17, 1972 break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters.

Lawyers for two of the five defendants, H. R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, are expected to attempt to show that top CIA officials believed sensitive operations in Mexico might be jeopardized by FBI investigations into the financing of the break-in.

In a memorandum to Walters 11 days after the Watergate burglars were arrested, Helms said:

"We the CIA still adhere to the request that they the FBI restrict themselves to the personalities already arrested or directly under suspicion and that they desist from expanding this investigation into other areas which may well, eventually, run afoul of our operations."

Helms and Walters have testified before five congressional committees that they advised White House officials there was no CIA connection to the break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters, although six of the original defendants had CIA backgrounds.

Haldeman's principal lawyer, John J. Wilson, sought to cross-examine Walters about the Helms memo Thursday. Associate Special Prosecutor James F. Neal objected on the basis that Walters never saw the memo or knew about it until June 1973.

His voice rising, Sirica turned to Neal and said, "Why don't you get on the telephone and get him back here? I think if I order him to, he'll come back here."

The judge went on, "Let's do it the right way instead of trying to cross-examine a memorandum."

Current CIA Director William E. Colby has explained Helms' memo as reflecting CIA fears in the summer of 1972 about press leaks from the FBI.

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In another trial issue, a potential snag developed in Sirica's order that three doctors examine former President Richard M. Nixon to determine his fitness to testify as a defense witness.

Dr. Charles A. Hufnagel, the chairman of the three court-appointed physicians, said Thursday it is up to Sirica to make arrangements through Nixon's lawyer for their independent medical inquiry.

There was no immediate indication how Sirica would handle the problem, although Hufnagel said he expects some clarification of his

instructions in two or three days.

Inside the courtroom, former Nixon re-election committee official Frederick C. LaRue completed his detailed description of his role as a central figure in the cover-up.

Under cross-examination by defense lawyers, LaRue said former Atty. Gen. John N. Mitchell delayed any decision on approving a political intelligence plan which allegedly culminated in the break-in.

Former deputy campaign director Jeb Stuart Magruder had quoted Mitchell as giving his reluctant approval to burglarizing and begging the Democrats. But LaRue, once a close aide to Mitchell, said the former director of the Nixon re-election committee said instead,

"This is not really something we have to decide now."

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